

The legal authority over nearly all matters in BIA is vested ultimately with the Secretary of the Interior. However, under both Secretary Lujan and Secretary Babbitt, much of this authority has been delegated to the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. This includes the power to take land into trust for gaming.

Secretary Babbitt took office in January 1993. After graduating from the University of Notre Dame, Babbitt received a masters degree in geophysics from the University of Newcastle, England, where he studied on a Marshall scholarship. In 1965, Babbitt graduated from Harvard Law School. From 1965 to 1967, Babbitt worked for the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity, first as an attorney in the Austin, Tex., field office – setting up Head Start, Legal Aid and other community action programs in the southwest – and then in the Washington, D.C. offices. In 1967, he joined the Phoenix law firm of Brown, Valassis & Bain, where he remained until 1974, becoming a partner during that time. He was elected and served as Attorney General of Arizona from 1975 until 1978. From 1978 to 1987, he served as Governor of Arizona. He became Governor upon the death of the incumbent, and thereafter was twice elected to the post. From approximately 1988 until 1993, Babbitt worked as a partner in the Phoenix office of the law firm Steptoe & Johnson, in a law practice that included some lobbying activities. During this period, Babbitt was also the President of the League of Conservation Voters. Babbitt was a candidate in the Democratic presidential primaries in 1988, and was seriously considered for appointment to the United States Supreme Court when President Clinton was filling vacancies in 1993 and 1994.

Secretary Babbitt's Chief of Staff was Thomas Collier from early February 1993 through June 1, 1995. Collier had worked at Steptoe & Johnson, primarily in its Washington offices, from 1976 until 1979, and from 1981 until 1993. In the intervening period, he was a Deputy